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ABSTRACT

Designed for high school teachers and administrators, this compilation of two journal articles, a bibliography, and a course list describes how one school took two days between semesters, abandoned regular schedules, and offered special minicourses suited to the talents of the staff and community. Minicourses are seen as a way to broaden horizons, expand interests, explore career choices, and break the routine of a long school year. The first article (from the NASSP Bulletin) presents practical suggestions concerning the organization and implementation of minicourses. Included are tips for scheduling, registration, making room assignments, and obtaining medical waivers and parental permission for off-campus courses. The second article (from the Illinois Career Education Journal; v35 n2 1978) further describes the benefits of these minicourse sessions to students and their community, and touches on sources of instructors, future plans, and spin-off effects of minicourses. Appendices include a supporting bibliography of 12 references and a list of nearly 200 minicourses offered between 1977 and 1980. (LH)

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End the Winter Doldrums—Think Mini!

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Yoga, Basic Needlepoint, Guerrilla Warfare, Disco Dance, and Computer Programming are just several of the 140 mini-courses offered by our small high school in an effort to widen our students' horizons and put an end to the winter doldrums.

The courses are offered for two "mini-daze" before the beginning of the second semester, providing a refreshing break in mid-winter for faculty and students alike.

We were able to schedule two full days for these mini-courses because our school had many early dismissal days—therefore, we could either change the official calendar to the regular time schedule or we could develop an alternative. The mini-course idea became the alternative.

Students and staff were enthusiastic about the idea, the superintendent supported it, and the board of education gave tentative approval, so we began to outline details regarding the operation of the mini-course days.

Organization of the Mini-courses

Thursday and Friday were selected as the two "mini-daze." Each was divided into three time blocks of about one hour and 45 minutes and labeled—A, B, C, for Thursday and D, E, and F for Friday. Lunch was served at the regular time between the second and third sessions.

Each teacher was requested to fill each of the time blocks with an appropriate course. They didn't have to teach all the courses themselves, but would serve as host for each course they "sponsored." Most courses were only one time block in length although one, Ceramics for Fun, covered all six periods. Only a few were repeated; Basic Auto Mechanics and Emergency Childbirth, for example.

Teachers complete a course description form which gives the following information:

Course Title
Instructor/Sponsor
Course Description
Time Block(s) Offered
Students' Cost (each was self-supporting)
Students' Supplies
Miscellaneous Information

These courses were given a code number for registration purposes and the forms were posted on the wall of our lobby.

The teachers contacted outside speakers, and the office sent them letters welcoming them to the project and confirming their course times.

Each day the morning announcements contained just enough new information to whet the curiosity of the students. Ten days before the project began, the scheduling was complete, and students were given a master

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Implementing the Idea

When the courses were established and posted and the master schedule distributed, we discovered it is as much work to prepare and register for two days as it is for two semesters, but at that point we were committed and the community's positive reaction reinforced our commitment.

Following registration days, the courses were either marked (on the lobby wall) "full," "go" or "cancelled," depending upon their individual status. Over two years, only 18 courses were cancelled because of insufficient enrollment, and those students were re-registered. Guest presenters were contacted by phone and told of the status of their course three days before the course was to be taught.

A room use chart was prepared, and the classes were assigned to every conceivable space, including locker rooms, depending upon their size and content. Scuba Diving was in a classroom and Canoeing in the shop, Macrame on the drawing tables, and Social Dance in the chemistry room; Death and Dying in the library, and the Student and the Law in the Spanish lab. A one-page copy of the room assignments was posted, distributed to all students, and mailed to the guest instructors.

Schedules for each teacher designated his or her responsibility for teaching or supervision. Since several students conducted classes and since many teachers developed more than their six courses, it was necessary to assign some teachers as hosts of other courses. Each class had a professional staff member to supervise, however.

Of the courses taught off campus, Skiing, Ice Fishing, Beginning Swimming, and Horsemanship required extra manpower and we found members of the community most helpful. We required medical waivers and parental permission for off-campus courses. We also required parental permission for Death and Dying and Emergency Childbirth because of the sensitivity of such subjects.

Guest instructors, eager to share their special interests, contributed their time and talents; their enthusiasm was transmitted to the students.

Evaluation proved the project was successful; all involved wanted to continue it. We felt that if just one student came away with a vocational or an avocational interest that would be an important factor in the rest of his life, then we were successful.

While there is no way to measure the effect of the program, it does seem that we are refreshed and shall begin the new semester, in mid-winter, with a little zeal.

Following is a sample of our schedule:

Course	No.	Instructor	A	B	C	D	E	F	Fee	Max/Min	Special Note
Ceramics for Fun	1	Mr. and Mrs. Way	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	5.00	10/16	Taught off campus
Yoga	2	David Lynn	xx	xx						10/15	Small rug, loose clothing
Magic	3	Bill Golden						xx		10/25	
Sign Language	4	Speech and Hearing Director					xx			10/20	

"End the Winter Doldrums--Think Mini,"
NASSP Bulletin
Vol. 62, No. 417, April, 1978

MINI-DAZE

Think Mini! has been the theme of two mid-January minicourse sessions where we explored the real world around us. Our school of 200 pupils and 19 staff members has been able to develop over 140 different short courses relying heavily on the resources of our community and surrounding area. Courses ranged from Ceramics, to Magic, from Welding Skills to Gourmet Cooking, and from Doll Making to the Soul of the Samaria. These "daze" of excitement allowed students to explore some career interests, develop some vocational skills, become actively involved with their own personal growth, and discover avocational interests that provide individual fulfillment.

Ross Wheeler, area funeral director, instructs a class in "Death and Dying."

The minicourse concept is not new and it has taken many forms. Minicourses can be offered for credit, on a long-term basis, and as part of the curriculum. We chose to take two full days between semesters, abandon the regular schedule entirely, and offer courses suited to the talents of the staff and the resource people around us. Some of the courses tended to be "way-out" but our underlying philosophy remained that we were interested in broadening horizons, expanding interests, exploring some career choices, and finding a way to break the routine of a long school year. If we could turn a kid "on" to a career choice, to a lifelong hobby, or to further intellectual inquiry, then we were successful.

Auntie Mame asked us in song to "open a new window" and we wanted to let some of the world into our lives. We wanted to educate for living.

We discovered these minidays had the effect of a community-wide stimulus. A new pattern of positive interaction developed as student related to teacher, teacher to teacher, student to student and school to community. The excitement generated by self-motivation carried the experiment to success. Participation on the part of students was nearly 100%. Teachers discovered new resources within themselves. The area contributed its many multi-talented people, and the school became a source of pride and publicity.

The two minicourse days were placed between the first and second semester, producing the effect of an intersession, a period of realignment and the chance for a fresh start. Each of the two days was divided into three time blocks and each staff member had the responsibility for providing a course or finding a resource person. Surprisingly we were able to offer far

"Mini Daze," Iilinois Career Education Journal, Vo.1. 35, No. 2, Autumn, 1978.

"End the Winter Doldrums--Think Mini," NASSP Bulletin, Vol. 62, No. 417, April, 1978.

Mrs. Beverly Ester, school nurse, offers instruction in "Emergency Childbirth."

more selections than the quota number established. In two years we offered 140 different courses, actually taught 119 of them, and brought in 81 community and area resource people.

Finding those people willing to share their careers, their hobbies, or their interests was not nearly as difficult as originally anticipated. We felt that any person coming into our building was fair game and that everyone had a talent to share. In addition to our staff we recruited:

high school students
faculty spouses
non-certified staff including a secretary and bus mechanic
school board member
yearbook salesperson
military recruiters
parents
area business people
Special Education Cooperative Director
Illinois Office of Education field representatives
area college and university personnel
county officials
area hobbyists

All these people contributed their time and talents. Their only reward was coffee and donuts and a free lunch.

These minicourse instructors have become the nucleus of our resource person file which has been used throughout the year and not restricted to these special activities. Students, staff, and guest instructors gave favorable responses, and their remarks guided the planning for the next year's mini-daze.

Future plans include opening next year's session to area adults. Nearby schools did send some student observers who became immediate participants and are now giving consideration to implementing their own minidays through their student councils.

The spin-off effects of these efforts perhaps can never be accurately measured. We operated under the assumption that if one student was turned on to a career or avocation interest, then we were successful. Obviously the break in the routine was welcome by students and teachers. If we truly believe in educating for living and not just educating for life, then we may have made more of a contribution in two days than in many years of formalized education.

During the lunch break on the first day of our mini experiment three girls were sitting lotus-position in the school lobby and excitedly describing the Yoga they had just learned. They attracted a small crowd and each shared their morning sessions with the others. They were genuinely excited! Do you ever recall seeing students run up to each other yelling, "Guess what I learned about commas today?" or "Boy did we have fun talking about the Battle of New Orleans!" A steady diet of mini-daze would be inappropriate and not meet the academic needs of the kids. But, for two days, we were able to generate a little excitement, open a few windows, and revitalize students and staff.

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ED 093 654

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MINI COURSE OFFERINGS

1977

Ceramics for Fun
Yoga
Magic
Sign Language
Disco Dance
Death and Dying
Men's Barbershiop
Girl's Ensemble
Fondue
Hors d'oeuvres
Desserts
History Simulation
Querrila Warfare
Values Clarification
Computer Programming
Welding
Ag in So. America
Norway: Its Resources
Band Ensembles
Athletic Injuries
Body Language
Backgammon
Anatomy of a Revolution
Latin America
Slow Dance
Beginning Shorthand
Beginning Typing
Income Tax
Job Hunters Preparation
Raising Show Dogs
Antique Guns
CB Radio
The Art of Relaxation
Our 3rd Hundred Years
Leadership Skills
Dangerous Parallel
Basic Needlepoint
Macrame
Slimnastics
Debate Techniques
A-V Techniques
Theatre Workshop
Skiing
Horsemanship
Emergency Childbirth
Guard Dog Demo.
Hair Styling
Scuba Diving
Indian Lore
Beginning Bridge
Travel Industry
Magic Theory
Hypnosis
Art of Salesmanship
Beginning Swimming
Lifesaving Techniques
Building Terrariams
Prep. of Cuttings
Canoeing
Crewel Work
History of Rock and Roll
Cycle Repair
Theatrical Make-up
Crisis Intervention
Banking
Basic Auto Mechanics
Student and the Law

1978

Ice Fishing
Outdoor Living
Facial Skin Care
Stock Market
Conflict Management
Generation Gap
Dating Problems
Doll making
Beekeeping
Gymnastics
Weight Lifting
Hawaiian Dance
Stained Glass Crafts
Indian Hill
Weather trends
Adv. Swimming
Self-Healing Therapy
Radio Industry
Rug Making
Engine Tune-up
So You Want to be a Star
Water Treatment
Dog Obedience
Indoor Fire Demo.
Cake Decorating
Canada
Poetry
Embroidery
Energy Conservation
Crime Prevention
Sports Officiating
Sports Seminar
Beg. Pinochle
Judo/Karate
Powder Puff Mechanics
Health Foods
The Beatles
Snowmobile Safety
Backpacking
Cross Country Skiing
Archeology
La Leche
SOul of the Samari
Modge Podge
Test Anxiety
Intro. to Gold
Civil War Battles
Metrics
Basic Baton Twirling
Frame Weaving
Beginning Crotchetting
Beg. Billiards
Bottle Cap Wreaths
Photography

1979

Old and New Brazil
Life in Alaska
Traveling With No Money
Denmark
Spain
Meat Cutting
Crepes and Omelettes
Ice Cream Making
Beg. Chess
Viet Nam: War Years
Trends in Literature
Psychic Energy
Spotting FIrearms
Native American Culture
Emergency First Aid
Reloading amunition
Winter Wilderness Survival
The Total Look
Play the Piano
Square Dance
Art of BElling Dancing
Jazz Band
Play the Drum
Beg. Guitar
Owning Your Own Business
Neighborhood Journalism
Health Care Tour
Upholstery
Chiropractic Practice
Auctioneering
Film Making
Income Tax Preparation
Archery
Tennis/Racquetball
The Frisbee
Rodeo Stunts
Rape Prevention
Street Drug Info.
Stress and Anxiety
Communication/Personal Rel.
Dough Art
Spiral Bound Books
Leather Tooling
Quilling
Blanket Weaving

Bread Baking
Macrame Wreaths
Floral Arranging
Acrylic Painting
Tapestry Weaving
Yarn Wreaths
Wool Flowers
Wood Prints

1980

Russian Cooking
Microware Cooking
Solitaire
Shanghai
Tripoley
Tumbling/Floor Exercises
Spanish for Travelers
Living Behind the Iron Curtain
Mexican Dance
Play the Recorder
CPR
Prepare for Marriage
Life Style Games
Pantomime
Violence in the Family
Human Skeleton
Lapidary Science
Fur Processing
Tatting
Linoleum Printing
Graphology
Stamp Collecting
Latch Hook Rugs
Plaster Craft Painting
Styrofoam Quilting
Comic Strip Jewelry
Sand Creations

(Subsequent lists do not include courses repeated - about 20% repeats).